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TLT 432

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May 24, 2010

**Professional Journal Article and Presentation**

Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C.. (2008). Teaching Disciplinary Literacy to Adolescents: Rethinking Content-Area Literacy. *Harvard Educational Review,* *78*(1), 40-59,279.  Retrieved May 24, 2010, from Research Library. (Document ID: 1460615831).

**PROBLEM:** Previous studies show an increasing need for students to learn literacy skills in school in order to increase future job performance. This study addresses the idea that the literacy skills are used and taught differently and with varying levels depending on the subjects’ material. It focuses on how chemistry, history, and math, use different strategies in students’ and teachers’ learning of the subject and teacher’s predictions of students’ mistakes.

**DESIGN:**  The study identified the literacy strategies each team used when working with material in their given field of study. Additionally, each team predicted possible areas of difficulties for students. The teachers were also observed by the literacy experts during a “think aloud” session to classify additional strategies used. The strategies where then taught to each of the different classroom of students.

**SAMPLE:** A team was created for each of the three disciplines (chemistry, history, and mathematics) each one including:

Two “disciplinary experts”

Two teacher educators

Two high school teachers

Two literacy experts

Two classrooms of high school students

**MEASURE:** The teachers where in a video taped room and were asked to think aloud when working through material pertinent to their field of work. They were then asked to identify the strategies they personally use, additionally, the literacy experts decoded the taped sessions for strategies. The teachers were then asked to implement the strategies in the classroom, the classes were observed and analyze to bring insight in how to strengthen the teaching of the literacy strategies.

**DATA ANALYSIS:** In the first part the teachers identified the strategies used while working with the various documents, in addition to the approaches observed done by the literacy experts. The teachers were given a list of strategies and were asked to pick the ones they used and to describe other strategies used in their thought process. After the strategies where identified, the teachers were asked to explain potential areas of difficulty for the students. All the data was then compiled and coded. In the second part, the classrooms where observed in order to help the teachers strengthen their teaching of the strategies.

**RESULTS:** Results show that different disciplines utilize different literacy strategies.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Subject | Chemistry | History | Math |
| Strategy | Transformation of information from one form to another | Paying attention to the author or sources | Rereading and close reading |
| Ideas about the reason for the strategy | Knowledge through experimentation | Document analysis | Theoretical theories were studied, not applied math concepts |
| Challenges students might face | The abstract language used and high lexical density | Technical vocabulary and nominalization of words | Learning the precise math definitions and meaning of symbols |

When looking at the teaching process, it is beneficial to adapt note-taking strategies to the type of literacy strategies used to understand the material in all subjects.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?:** Students need to use different literacy strategies when in learning and studying different disciplines.

**QUESTIONS TO PONDER:** Do different aspects of math require different strategies, for example theoretical versus applied concepts? Might it be important for students to identify the different types of strategies used in each discipline? What is the best way to have the students understand why the teachers use specific strategies?

**RELEVENCE TO MY LIFE:** This article is has useful information for me when teaching mathematics and mathematic literacy because it gives insight into which strategies are used to optimize the students’ learning process. Additionally, the study made me realize that it is important to have a “think aloud” session when working with information I plan on teaching so I can identify personal strategies. The identification of strategies will then help me structure my lesson and my note taking suggestions to the students. The study also helped me realize how different disciplines use different strategies and how it is important to help the students identify the different strategies they are using in my class and ask them about the strategies they use in other classes. Identifying strategies is a way to help the students further their general education, not just their math knowledge.